



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge

2017 Calendar of Events

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program



Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program! B.O.F. is a series of different Saturday courses and workshops that focus on teaching basic outdoor skills to you and your family to help you enjoy nature and encourage you to spend more time outdoors.

The courses taught vary greatly and cover everything from outdoor cooking to kayaking and everything in between. Our goal is to reconnect families to the outdoors, to our Refuge, and to each other. Becoming an outdoors-family programs provide you with a safe and fun setting to learn new skills, improve skills you may already have, or pass important skills on to the next generation. All are welcome and all programs are free unless otherwise stated.

Each course will be taught by an expert instructor and will allow you and your family to learn the basics as well as gain hands on experience in an environment where questions are welcomed and fun is a given!

Check our 2017 Calendar of Events for a list of courses and the dates they will be offered. If you have any requests for a course, please let us know. So find a course that inspires you to get outdoors and bring your kids, grandkids, nieces, nephews, brothers, and sisters and join us!



Welcome to Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge. Our Refuge is approximately 44,000 acres of beautiful oak hickory forests, open water, crop land, and hiking trails that we can't wait for you to explore! Our primary purposes are wildlife conservation, agriculture, industry, and recreation. Whether this is your first time at our Refuge or you are a long time visitor, there is always something new to see. So bring the family camping for the weekend, head out for a relaxing day of fishing, hike our trails, or do some bird-watching at our observation decks. If you have any questions please stop by our Visitors Center on Route 148 and speak with our staff; it is our goal to ensure you get the most out of the time you've taken to reconnect with nature.

Directions, Address & Contact Info

Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge

8588 Route 148

Marion, IL 62959

E-mail: craborchard@fws.gov

Phone Number: 618-997-3344

2017 Calendar of Events

January

Birding Tour

January 8th

Come and join us for a birding tour guided by Crab Orchard NWR Volunteers. Experienced birders will lead the tour. Binoculars are available at the Refuge Visitor Center for check-out.

Program begins at 8:15 am at the Refuge Visitor Center

Reservations are required.

Bald Eagle Tours

January 21st, 22nd, 28th & 29th

Guided tours visit eagle nests and areas of the Refuge where eagles may be spotted.

The cost is \$5 for adults and \$2.50 for youth under the age of 12.

Saturdays at 8am, 11am and 2pm, and Sundays at 11 am and 2 pm.

Sunday tours at 9am are available for interested scout groups.

Meet at the Crab Orchard NWR Visitor Center.

Reservations are required.

Reservations beginning December 19th.

February

Birding Tour

February 12th

Come and join us for a birding tour guided by Crab Orchard NWR Volunteers. Experienced birders will lead the tour. Binoculars are available at the Refuge Visitor Center for check-out.

Program begins at 8:15 am at the Refuge Visitor Center

Reservations are required.

Fee Free Day

Monday February 20th

March

Volunteer Recruitment Day

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

March 4th

Want to help out your local wildlife refuge? Come to the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer Recruitment Day! Volunteerism is a large part of the Wildlife Refuge system and could include you!

Event is at the Visitor's Center from 10 am - 3 pm

March Continued...

Bicycling in the Restricted Area

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

March 11th

Everyone knows that bicycling is great exercise, a great way to spend time outdoors, and a great way to spend time as a family. But did you also know it can be a great way to explore parts of the refuge usually gone unseen? Bring the whole family and join us for a bike trip through some of the restricted parts of the refuge! Take in the sites and see how much wildlife you can spot along the way.

Program begins at 9:30 am

Reservations are required.

Birding Tour

March 12th

Come and join us for a birding tour guided by Crab Orchard NWR Volunteers. Experienced birders will lead the tour. Binoculars are available at the Refuge Visitor Center for check-out.

Program begins at 8:15 am at the Refuge Visitor Center

Reservations are required.

Refuge Ponds Open

March 15th

Our ponds are open again! Time to do some fishing!

Youth Turkey Hunt Workshop

March 18th

Sign up early for a day of fun and learning at the Youth Turkey Workshop. Learn all you need to know about turkey hunting, safety and stay for some snacks and prizes!

Keep an eye on our website, Facebook Page or call to the Visitor Center for more information about this event.

April

Fishing Course

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

April 1st

Nothing brings families together quite like fishing. This program focuses on teaching the basics of fishing, all equipment provided to the younger (or less experienced) members of your family. Bring the whole crew, practice the basics, then end the day with a group bank fishing trip!

Visitors will meet at the Refuge Visitor Center

Program runs from 10am - 12 am

April Continued...

Wildflower Walks

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

April 8th

Join a knowledgeable guide at the Rocky Bluff trailhead for a hike and an in-depth program about spring wildflowers.

Meet at the Rocky Bluff Hiking Trail, Tacoma Lake Road

First program begins at 10 am

Second program begins at 1 pm

Reservations are recommended.

Birding Tour

April 9th

Come and join us for a birding tour guided by Crab Orchard NWR Volunteers. Experienced birders will lead the tour. Binoculars are available at the Refuge Visitor Center for check-out.

Program begins at 8:15 am at the Refuge Visitor Center

Reservations are required.

Family Archery Course

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

April 29th

Do you want to have a Family Archery Course? This is your opportunity! If you want to build your archery skills with all members of the family. Come and join us in a basic introduction of archery. All equipment will be provided for all the members of your family.

Program begins at 10 am

May

Outdoor Cooking Course

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

May 6th

Join us for a fun and delicious course! Learn from an expert how to whip up delicious meals over a hot fire and in a Dutch-oven. Bring the whole family down, learn a few recipes, and end with a well earned lunch!

Program begins at 10:00 am

This program will be at Martha's Theater

May Continued...

Birding Tour

May 14th

Come and join us for a birding tour guided by Crab Orchard NWR Volunteers. Experienced birders will lead the tour. Binoculars are available at the Refuge Visitor Center for check-out.

Program begins at 8:15 am at the Refuge Visitor Center

Reservations are required.

International Migratory Bird Day Festival!

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

May 13th

Join the international movement and come celebrate migratory birds at Crab Orchard! Our celebration will include a basics in birdwatching course, followed by a guided hike where we will practice everything learned in the presentation. Through the guided hike you will have photo opportunities.

Program starts at 9:30 am

Kayaking The Refuge Course

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

May 27th

Come kayak Crab Orchard NWR's lakes with us! Get an interpretive tour of the land around you, view wildlife as you pass by, and enjoy the breeze as you kayak out with our rangers. Boats are limited so if you are not bringing your own be sure to reserve your space! Ages 15 and up only.

First program begins at 9 am

Second program begins at 1 pm

Reservations are required.

June

Kids Fishing Derby

June 10th

The Kids Fishing Derby is a free event hosted by the Refuge and our many local sponsors, it is a wonderful opportunity for families to spend a day together on the Refuge fishing. The Derby is for kids 12 and younger.

Free lunch will be provided for participants and their families.

Registration begins at 8 am.

Event runs from 8am - 12 pm, Prairie Creek Recreation Area

June Continued...

Kayaking The Refuge Course Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

June 17th

Come kayak Crab Orchard NWR's lakes with us! Get an interpretive tour of the land around you, view wildlife as you pass by, and enjoy the breeze as you kayak out with our rangers. Boats are limited so if you are not bringing your own be sure to reserve your space! Ages 15 and up only.

First program begins at 9 am

Second program begins at 1 pm

Reservations are required.

Pollinators!

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

June 24th

We will have several activities free to the public to spread awareness about the importance of pollinators! Join us in celebrating bats, birds, bugs, bees, and more! Keep an eye on our website for postings about the activities to come.

Program begins at 10 am

July

Kayaking The Refuge Course Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

July 1th

Come kayak Crab Orchard NWR's lakes with us! Get an interpretive tour of the land around you, view wildlife as you pass by, and enjoy the breeze as you kayak out with our rangers. Boats are limited so if you are not bringing your own be sure to reserve your space! Ages 15 and up only.

First program begins at 9 am

Second program begins at 1 pm

Reservations are required.

Family Archery Course

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

July 15th

Do you want to have a Family Archery Course? This is your opportunity! If you want to build your archery skills with all members of the family, come an join us in a basic introduction of archery. All equipment will be provided for all the members of your family.

Program begins at 10 am

July Continued...

Geocaching the Refuge Course Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

July 29th

A fan of geocaching? Have no idea what it is, but want to find out? Come join us in the biggest international treasure hunt. Wildlife Refuges are a little different when it comes to geocaching: the only people who can hide caches are the rangers. Bring the family to our first B.O.F Geocaching adventure and see if you can find what our rangers have hidden. Side effects may include fun, exposure to nature, family bonding, and learning new skills such as orienteering and how to use a handheld GPS.

Program begins at 10 am

August

Nature Photography Course Becoming an Outdoors Family Program

August 5th

Learn the basics of nature photography with the whole family. Learn from our certified instructors and then practice your new skills on a group hike!

Program begins at 11 am

Kayaking The Refuge Course Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

August 19th

Come kayak Crab Orchard NWR's lakes with us! Get an interpretive tour of the land around you, view wildlife as you pass by, and enjoy the breeze as you kayak out with our rangers. Boats are limited so if you are not bringing your own be sure to reserve your space! Ages 15 and up only.

First program begins at 9 am

Second program begins at 1 pm

September

Kayaking The Refuge Course

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

September 2nd

Come kayak Crab Orchard NWR's lakes with us! Get an interpretive tour of the land around you, view wildlife as you pass by, and enjoy the breeze as you kayak out with our rangers. Boats are limited so if you are not bringing your own be sure to reserve your space! Ages 15 and up only.

First program begins at 9 am

Second program begins at 1 pm

Reservations are required.

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

Butterfly Round-up

September 9th

Monarch butterflies travel through our area each year on their way to spend the cold months of winter in Mexico. Visitors are invited to help catch and tag these butterflies as they feed and rest at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge.

Reservations are recommended.

Program Runs from 10am - 12pm

Birding Tour

September 10th

Come and join us for a birding tour guided by Crab Orchard NWR Volunteers. Experienced birders will lead the tour. Binoculars are available at the Refuge Visitor Center for check-out.

Program begins at 8:15 am at the Refuge Visitor Center

Reservations are required.

Hunting & Fishing Days

September 23rd & 24th

Come join us out at John A. Logan College for the 28th annual Southern Illinois Hunting and Fishing Days. Attend a casting workshop, watch the dock dogs compete, listen to the waterfowl callers and try archery, check out all the latest gear and much more.

September 24th 8am-5pm & September 25th 9am-4pm

Refuge Clean-up

September 30th

The Friends of Crab Orchard Refuge will be hosting the annual Crab Orchard Clean Up at the Prairie Creek Recreation Area.

Spend the day outdoors and help keep Crab Orchard beautiful.

Event runs from 8am - 1pm

September Continued...

Refuge Ponds Close

September 30th

Our ponds are closed. Ponds will be open again for fishing next year March 15!

October

Birding Tour

October 8th

Come and join us for a birding tour guided by Crab Orchard NWR Volunteers. Experienced birders will lead the tour. Binoculars are available at the Refuge Visitor Center for check-out.

Program begins at 8:15 am at the Refuge Visitor Center

Reservations are required.

Outdoor Spanish Immersion Class

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

October 14th

¿ Habla español? Trying to learn Spanish? Do you have a child in Spanish class that needs some practice? One of the best ways to learn a new language is to immerse yourself in it. Our Spanish Immersion class lets you try your hand out at speaking Spanish on a beautiful hike with two of our bi-lingual rangers! The program includes a brief introduction at the visitors center followed by a short hike.

Program begins at 10 am

Bicycling in the Restricted Area

Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

October 21st

Everyone knows that bicycling is great exercise, a great way to spend time outdoors, and a great way to spend time as a family. But did you also know it can be a great way to explore parts of the refuge usually gone unseen? Bring the whole family and join us for a bike trip through some of the restricted parts of the refuge! Take in the sites and see how much wildlife you can spot along the way.

Program begins at 9:30 am

Reservations are required.

Discovery Tours

October 22nd & 29th

We will open up the restricted portion of the refuge for a self-guided tour.

Tours begin at the Wolf Creek Causeway, volunteers will be stationed throughout the tour to answer questions.

Gates open from 1—4 pm

October Continued...

Halloween Bat Program Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

October 28th

Come to Crab Orchard NWR for some Halloween Fun! Learn about the importance of bats and build bat boxes with us to encourage these important pollinators.

Program begins at 1:00 pm

Reservations are required.

November

Birding Tour

November 12th

Come and join us for a birding tour guided by Crab Orchard NWR Volunteers. Experienced birders will lead the tour. Binoculars are available at the Refuge Visitor Center for check-out.

Program begins at 8:15 am at the Refuge Visitor Center

Reservations are required.

December

Birding Tour

December 10th

Come and join us for a birding tour guided by Crab Orchard NWR Volunteers. Experienced birders will lead the tour. Binoculars are available at the Refuge Visitor Center for check-out.

Program begins at 8:15 am at the Refuge Visitor Center

Reservations are required.

Youth Waterfowl Workshop and Hunt

December 15th & 16th

Sign up early for a day of fun and learning at the Youth Waterfowl Workshop. Learn all you need to know about waterfowl hunting, safety and stay for the pizza and prizes! The following day will be the hunt; hunters age 15 or younger may hunt ducks, geese, coots, and mergansers as long as they are accompanied by an adult at least 18 years of age. The accompanying adult cannot hunt during the weekend.

Keep an eye on our website, Facebook Page or call to the Visitor Center for more information about this event.



Free admission Day at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge

Head outdoors and enjoy some of the country's most magical places — refuges that normally charge entrance fees will offer an additional incentive — **free admission on these days in 2017:**

- January 16 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- February 20 – Presidents' Day
- August 21 - Total Solar Eclipse
- September 23 - 24 – Southern Illinois Hunting and Fishing Days
- September 30 - Public Land Day
- October 8 – First Sunday of National Wildlife Refuge Week
- November 11-12 – Veterans Day Weekend

